



COLORADO
 Department of Transportation
 Division of Transit & Rail
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DATE: January 11, 2019
TO: Transit & Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC)
FROM: David Krutsinger, Director - Division of Transit & Rail
 Sharon Terranova, Planning Unit Manager - Division of Transit & Rail
SUBJECT: Update from the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

Purpose

The Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (“Rail Commission”) is in the process of hiring a Director to provide Rail Commission staff support and manage the next-level study of Front Range passenger rail, and to also release a request-for-proposals (RFP) to select a consultant for that work. This memo provides an update on those activities.

Action

For Discussion Only.

Background

On December 1, 2017, the Rail Commission outlined a conceptual 15 year vision for implementing at least major segments of a Front Range Rail System, and including connection of the Amtrak Southwest Chief service from La Junta through Pueblo and Walsenburg. Table 1, below, revisits the major phases of that vision. The vision also includes support for shorter-term, starter-rail or extensions of existing passenger rail lines prior to full build-out.

Table 1: Annual Update on Status

Phase	Schedule	Goals	Status
Phase I: Define the Service Vision	Up to 2.5 Years, \$8.7 M	Hire Executive Director Hire Consultant to Conduct the Service Development Plan	SB 18-001 Funded the Rail Commission with \$2.5 Million, enough to hire the Executive Director and start the Service Development Plan
Phase II: Form the Governing Authority	Years 2.5 to 4, \$0.5 M	Determine Governance, Go to Voters in 2020	Have started considering governance options and funding structures
Phase III: Federal Project Development Process	Years 4 to 6, \$150 M to \$300 M	30% Design Complete Environmental Clearances	TBD based on funding
Phase IV: Final Design & Construction	Years 7 to 15 TBD	Complete Final Design Construct according to available funding	TBD based on funding
Phase V: Open the Service	Year 15	Operate starter to full- build based on available funding.	TBD based on funding & operating plan

Details

Key Questions of Defining the Service Vision, Governing Authority, and Federal Project Development Process:

- What would make interregional passenger rail a compelling investment for the entire Front Range?
- What service plan (frequency, days of week, hours of day, fares, speeds) make it compelling?
- Strategic choice: serve downtown Denver/Denver Union Station, serve Denver International Airport, both?
- What is the “right” combination of freight rail, highway, and new right-of-way, to achieve the vision?
- How to balance the benefits vs. costs, and pair that with appropriate funding choices?

Detailed Activities in 2018

- Mar 9 TIGER IX grant awards announced by USDOT, including \$16.0 Million for the Southwest Chief Stabilization Project, with Colfax County NM as the “lead” and Colorado and Kansas as supporting partners. The project replaces 60-year old bolted rail, old turnouts, and replaces crossings.
- May 31 SB 18-001 Signed into Law by Governor Hickenlooper, with \$2.5 Million for the Rail Commission
- Jun 13 - Sep 7 US Congressional Delegation inserts appropriation language for \$50 Million for “sole use” track by Amtrak on host railroads. Still pending continuing resolution or omnibus transportation bill as of January 2019, related to the government “shutdown”.
- Sep 21 \$0.9 Million of \$2.5 Million apportioned for immediate use
- Oct 12 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvement (CRISI) Grant submitted with \$100,000 in Rail Commission matching funds, and other matching funds, for the Southwest Chief track between Dodge City, KS and Las Animas, CO. The project would install positive train control over this stretch of track.
- Nov 1 Rail Commission Project Director position posted
- Nov 30 Rail Commission Project Director application period closes: 29 applications, 6 finalists identified
- Dec 20 \$9.16 Million CRISI Grant Awarded by USDOT for Dodge KS to Las Animas CO. This project will install positive train control from Dodge City KS to Las Animas CO.
- Dec 21 Rail Commission Project Director interviews conducted with 6 finalists
- Oct - Dec Consultant Request for Proposal Under Development, for release soon.
- Jan 2 2019 Supplemental Budget Request made to the legislature (JBC) for remaining \$1.6 M of \$2.5 M.

Next Steps

- Complete Rail Commission Project Director hire in January 2019
- Release the Consultant Request for Proposals (RFP) in January 2019
- January 11th 10:00 AM Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission meeting
- The new Rail Commission Project Director will request time at future TRAC and T&I Committee meetings to seek advice from those two groups.
- Respond to Amtrak condition to create a “business plan” for Amtrak Southwest Chief service and rail cost sharing across Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico.

Attachments

None